

# THE NEGRO WORKER



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WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U.**

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# LENIN --- THE INSPIRER OF THE OPPRESSED

(Fifth Anniversary of Lenin's Death)

By G.Slavin.

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Last January marked the Fifth Anniversary of the death of the Great Leader of the International Proletariat and the oppressed masses, the founder of the Great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics --- the First Republic of Labor. Replete with numerous proletarian struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression of the peoples, against the predatory policy of the imperialists, these five years mark another step forward on the road pointed out by Lenin to the complete triumph of the Social Revolution, to the final abolishment of national and racial oppression and to the formation of a World Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

After Marx, Lenin was the first one to raise definitely the question of the mutual relations between the proletariat in the countries of the oppressors and the exploited toiling masses in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. He taught us that the work of the National emancipation of the colonial peoples was the work of the International Proletariat and that the Communist Parties and Revolutionary Trade Union Organizations must become the organising centres to guide the toiling masses, who comprise the main force in the national emancipatory movement.

Lenin especially stressed the right of national self-determination, even to the point of complete secession and the organisation of an independent National State. "The right of self-determination" --- wrote Lenin --- "means only the right of independence in a political sense, the right of political secession from the dominant nations. Concretely, this demand for political democracy means complete freedom to agitate for the separation and extension of the question of secession by Referendum of the seceding nations."

Lenin considered that the struggle for self-determination was a basic factor in the struggle against imperialism and capitalism. "Just as a complete victory of Socialism is impossible without realising democracy to the full, so is it impossible for the workers to prepare for a victory over the bourgeoisie without conducting in all spheres a consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy."

At the same time Lenin condemned in no uncertain voice those who decline to launch the slogan of self-determination now, under the pretext that all the same it could not be realised under imperialism and could only be achieved after the victory of the Socialist Revolution. Such an attitude to the question of self-determination was qualified by Lenin as an attitude directly supporting reaction. "Not only the right of self-determination for the nations, but all the basic demands of political democracy can only be "realised" under imperialism in part, in a distorted fashion, and only then as a rare exception. The demand for colonial independence launched by all the revolutionary Social-Democrats (this was in 1916, when the Bolsheviks still called themselves Social-Democrats. G.S.) was also "unrealisable" under capitalism without a series of revolution. But from this, however, does not follow the refusal of the Social-Democrats to struggle immediately and resolutely for all these demands --- such a refusal would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and reaction --- on the contrary, it is necessary to formulate and carry out all these demands not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary fashion."

Self-determination, even if this means the establishment of an Independent National State, does not mean the division of the international proletariat nationally or racially. Hand in hand with the struggle for national independence the International Proletariat must struggle for international unity on an organised basis of all workers irrespective of color, nationality or religious convictions.

The struggle for national self-determination must reinforce and not weaken international working class unity, and Lenin, who struggled so



ruthlessly against the reformists distorting the slogan of self-determination, showed clearly that the foremost revolutionary workers among the oppressed nations "must especially defend and put into effect on an organised basis complete and unconditional unity between the workers of the oppressed nations and the workers of dominating nations. Without this it is impossible to press forward the independent policy of the proletariat or its class solidarity with the workers of other countries."

The right of self-determination is a concrete demand for the oppressed Negro masses in America, Africa and the West Indies. For them the right of self-determination must become a central slogan, around which to mobilise the masses for the general struggle against capitalism and imperialism. The Negro masses will not be alone in this struggle. Following the teachings of their Great Leader, militant workers throughout the world, especially the workers in the U.S.A., England, France, and Belgium will actively aid their Negro fellow-workers, and under the flag of **LENINISM** this struggle will be waged until victory is achieved.

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### THE AFFILIATION OF THE FEDERATION OF NON-EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE R.I.L.U.

The Workers (White and Black) on the Offensive Against Capitalist and Imperialist Exploitation.

By J.W.Ford.

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In the latter part of January, the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions of South Africa made application for affiliation to the Red International of Labor Unions, which was accepted by the Executive Bureau in regular meeting of February 14, 1929. The Federation is composed of the following unions:

Name	Membership	Name	Membership
Native Laundry Workers	900	Transport Workers	300
Clothing Workers	400	Food and Drink Workers	100
Mattress and Furniture Workers	600	Meat and Cold Storage Work.	314
Motor and Mechanic Workers	200	Cotton and Rope Workers	98
Native Baker Workers	300	Steel and Engineering Work.	200
		Dairy Workers	200

These unions have been organised since the beginning of 1928. New unions are in the process of organisation, especially in the basic industries, which will eventually affiliate with the Federation.

According to reports from South Africa, the I.C.U., a semi-trade union organisation, is falling off in numbers and influence, because of its failure to fight for the economic demands of the workers and to lead them in militant struggle. The reformist leadership of the I.C.U. recently invited the assistance of Ballinger of the Independent Labor Party of England.

The Unions of the Federation have led many militant strikes; they have successfully negotiated for the elimination of the color-bar in some of the white unions and held joint meetings of black and white workers.

Recently there was an amalgamation of the native and European Laundry Workers' Union, solely through the efforts of the Federation. Native unions have, in most industries, 100% membership. The leaders of the I.C.U., seeing that they are losing ground, are beginning splitting tactics by organising native unions in the same industry.

The affiliation of the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions of South Africa to the Red International of Labor Unions is of significance not only to the proletariat of South Africa --- white and black, but to the



international labor movement as a whole. Recently we saw a general strike wave sweeping Europe. It was the struggle of the European workers against the effects of capitalist rationalisation. We now witness a wave of strikes in South Africa and particularly in Rhodesia. On the top of this comes the news of the native uprising in Equatorial Africa.

South Africa is slowly rising from the position of a supplier of raw materials (mainly to the British Empire), to that of a competitor on the world market, in coal, iron and steel. The recent industrial developments are quite significant --- the completion of the big steel mill at Pretoria, the large exportation of coal, a part of which passes through the Port of Delagoa Bay, \* the Government decision to proceed with the erection of diamond-cutting works in South Africa, which threatens the diamond-cutting industry in Europe. Politically, the South African Government is struggling for formal independence. These events point to the general tendency of South Africa to "strike out for itself". Very notable in this respect are the negotiations between the Steel and Iron Corporation (formed with the object of carrying into effect the South African Government Scheme of developing the metal industry in South Africa) and the German Firm "Gute-Hoffnungshuette" as to cooperation in the general scheme. This has caused alarm in leading quarters of British Imperialism. Of course, Britain still holds sway over South Africa. However, the struggle between Great Britain and the South African Government undermines British Imperialism and influences the workers accordingly.

#### The Position of Native Workers

Wages of native workers are from one to two shillings per day lower than the requirements for the bare necessities of life, and out of this miserable pittance rents and taxes are to be met. In spite of the shortage of native farm labor, hut-taxes and deplorable conditions in the farming districts are driving the peasants into the industrial and urban centers, making the competition in the labor market keener, producing unemployment, especially among the white workers. Pass-laws and repressions of all sort are instituted against the native workers. The bourgeoisie is hindering the organisation of the native workers, and is hindering especially the advent of militant organisation. The bourgeoisie finds helpers among native labor leaders of the type of Kadalie, who together with their white reformist friends, as for instance Ballinger of the Independent Labor Party of England, are doing their utmost to make the native trade union movement as harmless as possible for the capitalists.

#### Position of White Workers

The color-bar designed to protect the white workers and to assure them "most favourable positions" has proved of no avail. White workers are being forced out of work and replaced by low paid natives. In many cases native workers are employed contrary to the provisions of the Color-Bar Act. There were 53,000 applications for work at the Labor Exchange by white workers in 1926, out of which only 7,936 were supplied with work; the white workers are also being forced to accept work in many lines, jobs formerly considered fit only for native workers, particularly is this true in some cases on the railroads.

#### Change in Attitude of the Workers --- Class Struggle

The conditions of the "poor whites" of South Africa is deplorable. Native workers are invading the skilled trades, thus threatening the position of the "most favoured white workers". The white workers are beginning to understand that only hand in hand with the native workers can they fight the employers for a better living. Significant was the relative

\* There is an agreement between the South African Government and the Portuguese Government allowing the former to recruit native labor in Mozambique to work in the South African mines.



large vote recently cast in the Johannesburg Trades Council in favour of opening their unions to native workers.

This is the situation which gave rise to the formation of the Federation of Native Trade Unions and its affiliation to the RILU. Our comrades from the Federation write:

"These unions have already been baptized in the capitalist fire. The laundry workers have won six strikes, lost one; furniture workers won two strikes, clothing workers won one and lost one, drivers won one strike. Previously native strikes in South Africa were unknown with perhaps one exception".

#### Lowering of Color-Bars

This shows that the workers are on the offensive. Most of these strikes have been wage-strikes. We have here a clash of class interests.

Another quotation from our comrades reads:

"The existing parallel white unions have more or less broken, consciously broken the color-bar; meetings between black and white workers in the laundry, furniture and clothing industries are a very common occurrence. Unfortunately, there are no white drivers' union, or food and drink workers' union, or we might come to some agreements. Negotiations are going on between the white miners' union and the colored mineworkers' union."

This is also symptomatic and shows that economic conditions are breaking down the antagonisms of color, that in South Africa the white and black workers are beginning to unite upon the basis of the class struggle. In the course of 1928 we saw for the first time in the history of South Africa joint strikes of black and white workers, we saw black workers coming to the support of strikes of white workers and vice-versa. This new tendency towards Unity is undeniable. It even compelled the so-called "Left" laborists to make some radical gestures. Thus, Medley, Labor member of the Government and Minister of Posts, received a deputation of native workers, and the Johannesburg Trades Council where there was quite a large vote in favour of admission of Negro workers in the unions. However, in the unity and the joint strikes of white and black workers we have the real thing, the recognition of the class struggle. What we are witnessing here on this far-flung sector of the international labor front, is the beginning of an offensive against the intolerable conditions prevailing in South Africa.

#### Political Situation

The situation in South Africa for the militant workers has its political side and its political significance. A bitter struggle is going on now preliminarily to the forthcoming elections, and however much the question of the natives is thrust into the background or whatever little underhand political tricks are made to confuse the issue, the BIG political issue, THE QUESTION OF THE NATIVES, faces the whole working class of South Africa. Hertzog declares for an "All-White South African Government". The strikes of the workers in South Africa cannot remain purely economic struggles, they become unavoidably political ones; there are clashes with the police, with the courts and with the Government. The big question of Native Labor is the biggest political issue. The Labor Party is at one with the capitalists and against native labor, which is deprived of all political rights in South Africa.

#### Decisions of the Fourth Congress of the RILU

The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International has advanced the slogan of a Workers' and Peasants' Government, which as applied to South African conditions means: "a Native Republic", a "Black Republic", since the great bulk of the South African's proletariat is black, with safeguards and protection for all sections of the working population. The provocative abuse in the capitalist press, not only in South Africa but throughout England, and even in the petty-bourgeois Negro



press of America, further demonstrates the soundness of this slogan. The question of labor in South Africa is not only a question of industrial labor but also of agricultural labor closely connected with the agrarian situation.

The Fourth Congress of the RILU summed up the situation in South Africa in the following resolution:

"The central problem of the trade union movement in South Africa is that of COLORED LABOR and the relations which exist between the organisations of the white workers and those of the colored workers, the latter constituting the great majority of the South African proletariat.

"The antagonism and hostility between white and colored workers are advantageous only to the capitalists and are being fostered by them in every way. Beginning with 1922 (the strike lost by the white trade unions) the condition of the white workers is getting continually worse, in consequence of the attraction of ever-larger numbers of cheap SKILLED colored workers to the mining enterprises. There is only one way out of the situation, the single organisation of the white and colored workers, the united front of the whole of the South African proletariat against Capital".

Subsequent events have proved the correctness and the soundness of this resolution. We see the rise in South Africa of militant trade unions, their successful efforts at unity, and their appeal for affiliation to the RILU. The reformists are for class collaboration, against the class struggle. However, the reformists are fast losing ground in South Africa, the workers are deserting the reformists and are going over to those who lead a militant struggle. Here too, on the question of reformism, the Fourth Congress of the RILU pointed out that the reformists were agents of the bosses, that the workers would have to repudiate their leadership and fight them as they fight Capital. In South Africa the workers struggle against their Ballingers, as elsewhere they struggle against their Thomases. There is the greatest need too for the native to fight Kadalie and his group who by their affiliating the I.C.U. to the Amsterdam International have betrayed the workers and led them into the camp of the capitalists and imperialists. The Fourth Congress in its resolution on the Amsterdam International says:

"In the last few years the Amsterdam International and the International Industrial Secretariat, led by the former, have particularly shown their dependence on the international bourgeoisie.

"The colonial policy of the Amsterdam International betrays the interests of the workers of the imperialist countries and colonies alike. Instead of aiding the movement of the colonial workers and endeavouring to raise their living standards --- in which are also vitally interested the bulk of the workers in the imperialist countries --- the Amsterdam International and the leaders of its important sections are either holding aloof when it suits them, or they try to take the labor movement under their wing in order to render it harmless from the standpoint of the interests of imperialism.....

"Quite clearly the role of Amsterdam is that of a tool of imperialist capital in its struggle against the national-revolutionary and labor movement in the colonies and semi-colonies."

Indications as to the loss of influence of the reformist leadership of Kadalie is shown by the loss of support in the ICU and also by the fact that large sections of the workers of the ICU are coming into the new Federation. Ballinger has been brought to South Africa to save the semi-trade union ICU from further disintegration. Kadalie is making frantic efforts to regain his lost prestige. The workers find the money-changers fighting over the spoils of office, the main fight being between Champion, who is in leadership of the Natal Branch, and Kadalie. So the reformists are on their last leg and the workers must give them the final kick.



### The Tasks of the New Federation of Trade Unions

The most important task of the Federation is to bring the great mass of native workers into their organisation. Only with the mass organisation of the native workers can there be an effective and successful struggle against Capital. This organisation must become the vanguard for revolutionary struggle in South Africa. The mass organisation of the native workers can beat down the oppressive measures of the Government and the Bourgeoisie.

At the same time the Federation must struggle more and more for the unity of the trade union movement upon the basis of the class struggle, it must more and more bring about the consolidation of native and white organisations, and the native and white workers. This is a basic task. The many tendencies towards joint meetings and joint strikes of the white and black workers show the feasibility and possibility of this unity. The Federation must achieve the bringing together of all the workers of South Africa, white and black. There must be one and only one Federation of Workers of South Africa.

### Unity of Black and White Workers

The reformists pretend and are seemingly defending the standards of the white workers by opposing the black workers; they refuse to bring the black workers into the organisations of the white workers, pretending all the time, that they are securing the position of the white workers, defending the lowering of the standards of the white workers against the competition of the black workers. But what is actually taking place is precisely the opposite. The bosses are freely using the black workers against the white workers, thus the tactics of the reformists play into the hands of the capitalists against the interests of the white and black workers.

The main object of the black workers is to overcome this. They mean still further to struggle, not alone to achieve equal wages and conditions but to raise the general standards of all the workers above the prevailing standards, fighting continually for higher wages and better conditions. It is quite clear that black workers must struggle to raise the position of the whole proletariat to struggle jointly in strikes, etc., for this objective. But without common struggle of the black and white workers, this cannot be realised. Thus, the black workers, whose interests are insolubly bound together, must struggle to achieve and raise the standard of wages and of working conditions of the whole proletariat. This is the basic task of the working class of South Africa.

The Federation must strengthen its present affiliated unions and penetrate more and more into the basic and principal industries, particularly mining. It must extend its operations into the countryside and organise the agricultural workers and peasants, bringing them into close unity for a united struggle of workers and peasants against Capital.

A merciless struggle must be carried on against reformism and the reformist bureaucrats. Kadalie-ism must be swept out of South Africa; Ballinger must also be swept away. No trace of reformism must be left. The whole reformist tactics must be explained to the workers, the role of the Amsterdam International, of collaboration and betrayal must be pointed out to the broad working masses. The connection between Amsterdam and every bourgeois State must be pointed out, the role they are playing at the present moment in bringing Kadalie to Europe to receive his instructions from the British bourgeoisie. The Federation must point out to the workers the relationship between Thomas' trip to China and the East, and Ballinger's into South Africa. Despite the fact that large numbers of workers are coming over from the ICU into the Federation, it must do all in its power to win over the remaining members individually and collectively by explaining to them the real role of the leaders of the ICU, and giving them a militant lead. There is no fight with the members of the ICU, the Federation has a militant and correct Programme of Action for them.



### A Programme

The basis of the struggle in South Africa is the day to day struggles against the repressive and oppressive measures of Capital, therefore some of the basic day to day tasks and demands must be the following:

1. **EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK:** Negro workers as a rule are working at lower wages than white workers. In South Africa the wages of native workers are from 4 to 5 times lower than the wages of European workers in most fields of work; in order to raise the standards of living and subsistence of Negro workers it is necessary to struggle for equal pay for equal work, regardless of race, color or sex. At the same time the Negro workers together with all other workers must wage a common fight for higher wages, raising the general standard of living of all the workers.
2. **AN EIGHT-HOUR DAY:** One of the main tasks of the Negro workers should be to obtain an 8-hour day and ultimately together with the rest of the working class a 7 and a 6-hour day.
3. **FORCED LABOR:** In South Africa forced labor takes the form of contract labor, natives being conscripted and recruited in Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa) and transported long distances to work in the mines of South Africa, where they live in compounds and cattle pens. This system is legalised through the so-called "Mozambique Treaty", which exists between Portugal and the South African Government.
4. **WORKERS' LEGISLATION (INSURANCE, ETC.):** As one of the means of raising the living standard of the workers we must demand the adoption and enforcement of insurance laws that provide for the care, at the expense of the employers, of all workers in case of unemployment, accidents, sickness and also the paying of old age pensions and death benefits.
5. **CLASS COLLABORATION:** We must wage a militant fight against Government coercion, compulsory arbitration, company unions; against all reformist class collaboration.
6. **RACIAL BARRIERS IN THE TRADE UNIONS:** We must conduct a relentless fight against racial bars in some of the existing white unions, and for the opening of the unions to all workers regardless of race and color, as well as against the division of unions on national, racial and religious lines.
7. **AGAINST WHITE TERRORISM:** We must carry on a resolute fight against terrorism, in all its forms --- against lynchings, police and soldier terrorism, against the assassination of trade union leaders and social workers, against their arrest and deportation.
8. **HOUSING AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS:** We must demand that adequate attention be paid to the protection of the health and well-being of the Negro workers and their families and that proper houses and social surroundings be provided for.
9. **COLOR-BARS:** All "Color-Bars" and caste systems, which split the ranks of the workers must be abolished.
10. **AGAINST LAND CONFISCATION, POLL AND HUT TAXES:** A special problem is the land question and particularly the agrarian policy of the South African Government. We must therefore fight against confiscation of native land and for the restitution of all land confiscated in the past to the native communities, as well as for the abolition of all special taxes and laws which result in the driving of the peasants from the land.
11. **CIVIL RIGHTS:** A basic task for agitational and organisational activities necessary in our main struggle against imperialism, is to achieve elementary civil rights, universal suffrage, freedom of speech, freedom of workers' press, the abolition of all racial discriminations, abolition of "Pass-Laws", and of all other laws and regulations depriving the Negro worker of his rights.
12. **SELF-DETERMINATION OF NEGROES:** In South Africa the trade unions must become the leading elements and transform the economic struggles into political struggles, into the struggle for political power and self-determination.



With this Programme and a relentless struggle to realise it class federation will grow from strength to strength and will be able to lead the working masses of South Africa victoriously against the forces of Capitalism and Imperialism.

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## NATIVE WORKERS' T. U. MOVEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

By T. Reed.

The native labor movement of South Africa during the last quarter of 1928 was distinguished by a number of events which once more brought this movement into the centre of attention of the country. In October the native workers in one of the Government enterprises, the experimental veterinary station in Pretoria, declared a strike. The workers of the Station, who are practically all united in the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, demanded wage increases and nominated for the negotiations with the management a delegation in which two representatives of the local union branch participated. The management, however, acting according to the directions from the Ministry for Agriculture, emphatically refused to permit the representatives of the Union to negotiate and then issued an order to dismiss all members of the delegation. This served as the pretext for the declaration of the strike of 75 workers, union members. Immediately after the non-turn up of the workers at the station, a company of police arrived, and by threats of arrests attempted to force the workers to call the strike off. The workers refused to submit and were immediately arrested and sent to prison. After several days imprisonment the workers were sentenced to pay a fine of 10/- each, and upon return to the station they were all dismissed.

Such is the short shift meted out to the native workers upon their first attempt at organised action during the past year. Even the elementary standards of law, which have been established by these same authorities were violated.

As the experimental station is a Government enterprise and all these actions were taken upon the immediate directions of the given ministry, by these actions the Government in no uncertain sense showed how it intends to react to analogous action by the native workers, and what is its attitude towards the activities of the native Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union.

When Kadalie, the Secretary of the Union, arrived at the scene of the strike, he was, under threat of arrest not even permitted to set foot on the territory of the station.

Thus, all the services of the leaders of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in class collaboration, all their assurances that the union is being reorganised on a purely trade unionist basis and has the task of improving the position of the native workers by "constitutional means" (this in a country where constitution signifies for the black workers complete disenfranchisement and ruthless exploitation), all their endeavours to carry favour with the employers by expulsions of Communists from the Union --- all this was of no avail and did not help them in getting the recognition of their right to participate in the settlement of the dispute which involved the native workers and union members.

Directed in its native policy by the criers of "Native Danger", the Government of the bloc of the Nationalist-Labor Party has proved that it prefers to break up any and all, even the most moderate, movement of native workers.

The more "sober" ones in the camp of the South African bourgeoisie during the lively polemics in the press, which started in connection with the strike, were not able to escape the impression.



with the events at the veterinary station, beat an alarm as to the Government pushing the native workers into the embrace of the Communists by such an attitude towards the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, and expressed an opinion that it was necessary to consider whether "the organisation (ICU) promises to become as a safety valve in cases of dissatisfaction of native workers". The press of the South African Party (a Party representing the interests of British commercial and industrial bourgeoisie on its part, gives an emphatically positive reply to this question.

The other action taken by the native postal workers, who demanded from the Ministry wage increases and general improvement of the conditions of labor is in the closest connections with the Pretoria Strike. This action has become especially important in view of the fact that it was the immediate cause of the subsequent ministerial crisis and the resignation of Madeley, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, member of the "Left" Wing of the South African Labor Party, and the only representative of that Wing in the Cabinet.

After Madeley, under the pressure of the South African Trade Union Congress (white), to which the I.C.U. had appealed for assistance, had commenced negotiations on the position of native postal workers with the ICU and Congress delegation, the Prime Minister Hertsog requested him to resign in view of the fact that his attitude towards the ICU was not in conformity with that of the Government and did not accord with the position taken up by the Minister of Agriculture in connection with the recent strike in Pretoria. As Madeley refused to resign, Hertsog resolved to carry out his line to the end, himself resigned, and then once more accepted the post of Prime Minister, forming a new Cabinet, leaving out Madeley, who was replaced by Sampson, a member of the chauvinist Cresswell Group, which had split off from the Labor Party. As regards Madeley's stand, it was only to be noted that the significance of this Left gesture taken by him should not be overestimated. That his action (negotiations with the ICU) is nothing but a Left gesture, is proved by the whole subsequent policy of the "Left" group of the Labor Party, to which Madeley belongs and which now, on the eve of the Parliamentary elections, is once more seeking rapprochement with the Cresswell Group, as without the united forces of both groups their chances are exceedingly small at the elections.

All this characterises the conditions in which the native labor movement of South Africa develops. And it becomes clear that only by revolutionary action, despite the inevitability of heavy losses, only by overcoming all conciliatory reformist tendencies, will the native labor movement of South Africa be able to develop successfully and strengthen its ranks.

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## THE NEGRO REVOLT IN "FRENCH" EQUATORIAL AFRICA

By Barbe.

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What is generally called the French Congo is composed of four districts: Oubanghi-Chari, Gabon, Middle Congo, Hatu Ogoue; since the Versailles Treaty the former German colony Cameroon was added to this.

In 1910 the approximate black population of these four colonial districts --- without Cameroon --- was 9 million inhabitants. According to the official figures given by the Minister Sarraut in 1912 this population had fallen to 7 million and the last official figure which was given in 1921 it had fallen still lower to 2,800,000. These figures indicate the constant and almost unbelievable destruction of the population, which is going on under imperialist colonisation. The disappearance of more than 6 million Negroes is not due solely to reasons of migration nor is it due



entirely to military causes such as recruiting for the colonies in Northern Africa and for service in France, but it is mainly due to the policy and practice of French imperialism in these colonies. This constant decrease of the population has been acknowledged by the official representatives of French Imperialism. The petty-bourgeois pacifist deputy Valude, who belongs to the French Radical-Socialist Party, emphasised in 1924 the fact "that the French intervention in these regions has led to a decimation of the population." The Minister of the Colonies, Maginot, said in December 1928, in a speech on the colonial budget: "We have been frequently reproached for the great mortality which the construction of the Congo-Ocean Railway is causing among the population of French Equatorial Africa. It is a fact, that this mortality is extremely high".

### Second Important Revolt in Congo

Now concerning the actual revolt. This is not the first insurrection of the Congo Negroes. Since French imperialism penetrated into the Congo there has been an almost uninterrupted fight of a lesser or greater violence going on between the Negroes and the imperialist warlords. But this is the first time, that we meet with an organised insurrection not confined to some places, but extending over the whole of the territory. The first insurrection that may be compared to the present one, but which yet was less important, took place in 1924; it lasted only several days and it was drowned in blood by imperialism. Certain bourgeois sources of information have consequently given more or less contradictory figures about this insurrection, but all of them state that thousands of persons were killed.

The present insurrection is much more important than the insurrection of 1924; it comprises 12 centres of the colony; Fort-Archambault, Audar, Mayo-Kabi, Callas, Carnot, etc. All the bigger settlements have gone into revolt. One may say that the difference between this insurrection and that of 1924 lies in the fact that this time the revolt against French imperialism comprises the total population of the French Equatorial Africa.

This is not the only characteristic and the only new aspect of this insurrection. Another one is its duration. According to the latest informations, the insurrection began on November 5, 1928, and lasted with the same violence till the beginning of January 20, and still goes on. This is really without precedent.

What are the new forms of this armed uprising, the new forms that developed in this insurrection? The great characteristic of this insurrection is the fight against forced recruitment. The most practical form which this fight has taken is the following: the Negroes in those centers which I have already indicated, have killed in a systematic manner all the chiefs of the recruiting troops.

### Negroes Capture French Troops

The second phase, one may say, in the development of the insurrection, is the routing of the reinforcements that were sent after the first fights, by the Negroes of the villages in revolt.

But this insurrection has adopted an even more important form. Even in the very modest information given in the official press, we find indications that a number of bridges, etc., have been destroyed; that villages have been fortified by the Negroes for resistance and another fact that colonial infantry were taken prisoners by the Negroes which is unanimously qualified by the bourgeois press as absolutely unheard of prior to this.

On the strength of these rather general indications, one may say that this insurrection constitutes the most serious and wide-spread insurrection that has ever taken place in French Equatorial Africa, considering the number of Negroes involved, the protracted nature of the fight and the many forms it assumed.

What are the causes of this insurrection? If one were to give a general answer, one might say, that it is the oppression of French imperialism, but examining more deeply, one may find two great general and



more fundamental causes for this insurrection:

1. The considerable strengthening of the efforts of French imperialism to realise the economic value of French Equatorial Africa.

2. The stronger efforts of French imperialism to make French Equatorial Africa participate in the reorganisation of the imperialist forces towards a new war. In this connection one must stress the fact, that French imperialism has established a whole plan for what is called "The Black Army" --- a black army, which is to be concentrated in French Northern Africa, in Algeria and Tunis as well as around certain industrial centres in France. The first practical results of this plan have already been seen during the recent strikes and particularly in the region of Gard in France, where 18,000 miners were on strike, and where the white soldiers had fraternised with the strikers; there the white artillery was replaced by black troops from Senegal and from French Equatorial Africa.

French Equatorial Africa has in fact an enormous economic importance for French imperialism; it is mainly providing France with rubber, wood, certain special kinds of wood, and it possesses natural resources such as mines and copper; it is also furnishing manioc, and finally, it is a region where oil may be obtained. During the last years French imperialism has made great efforts to obtain maximum results in French Equatorial Africa.

Actually, almost 40 companies have been spread on the territory of this colony. These 40 companies occupy a territory of nearly 800,000 square kilometres. One might quote the names of all these companies but this is perhaps not necessary; what must be stressed is the tremendous increase of the profits of these companies especially during the last four years. The proportions of this increase in general vary from 1 to 6 million.

Concerning the increase of capital of these companies one may find interesting facts. Thus: the Compagnie Equatoriale des Mines increased its capital of 7,500,000 francs to 20 millions in five years; the Compagnie Miniere du Congo increased its capital from 1 million in 1906 to 23 millions in 1925. One of the foremost companies the Sangha Oubanghi augmented its original capital of 12 million francs in 1911 to 36 million francs in 1925.

It was on the territory of the Compagnie Forestiere de Sangha Oubanghi that the insurrection started. This company has the monopoly for rubber and manioc in this district. It realised in 1926 8 million francs of net profits plus three millions for amortisation, a total of 11 million francs. The form of exploitation in this district and in general over the whole of French Equatorial Africa may be characterised as forced labor. French imperialism has already years before the war abolished the slavery laws in its colonies, but instead there has been established a system of forced labor for the Negro population which has in fact re-established the system, that had been legally abolished. It is not only forced labor in the sense of individual production of the Negro but forced labor in the sense of a definite programme of results through the obligation of a whole village to provide a certain production. Thus, all the villages on the territory of the Compagnie Forestiere de Sangha Oubanghi are obliged to provide a certain quantity of rubber and manioc, the amount of which is fixed by the Company. If a village and its inhabitants do not provide every month the quantity assigned to them then violent repressions are applied against the village, which range from the imposing of a fine to the complete destruction of a village. For rubber the Negro worker is paid 1 franc per kilogramme and the Negro has to spend 1 month in the forest in order to obtain ten kilos of rubber (ten francs per month!). For manioc the Negro is paid one franc for a basket of 10 kilogrammes. Whilst this Compagnie Forestiere, which has the rubber and manioc monopoly in this district is paying one franc per kilogramme of rubber and one franc for ten kilogrammes of manioc, in Oubanghi-Chari 12 francs are paid for one kilogramme of rubber, and 2 francs 50 for 10 kilogrammes of manioc. One must emphasise the fact that a permanent repression, which is exercised against



the Negroes, and which is also one of the causes of this insurrection, lies in the fact that the Negroes more and more want to give up the gathering of rubber and manioc and concentrate on the gathering of palm-oil nuts. The market for these is divided between a number of companies so that a competition exists and the Negroes are able to demand much higher prices; (Negroes may harvest approximately 30 to 35 kilogrammes of palm nuts per month for which they are paid from 6 to 7 francs per kilogramme). They are going in for this work all the more readily as it is much less tiresome than the gathering of rubber and manioc and also as it allows them to remain near their village and even to return there every night, whilst the gathering of rubber compels them to go into the forest, which may be far from their residence.

What is the role of the French Government with regard to these capitalist companies? Here one may study the whole hypocrisy of the law about the suppression of slavery. In French Equatorial Africa we have in my opinion the most typical example of the connection that exists between the State and the capitalist exploiting companies directed against the native population. The role of the French Government in French Equatorial Africa is that of the recruiting agent of labor power for the capitalist companies. This fact is, besides, legally admitted, as every contract of the capitalist companies contains a concrete paragraph which obliges the French State, its colonial government, and its military forces to recruit as many Negroes for the company, as is fixed in the contract. Thus, the Societe Forestiere, which I have already mentioned is "furnished" approximately 5,000 persons per month. Another company, the Societe du Haut-Oghoue is "furnished" 1,500 Negro workers, and finally, a company which has only of late begun to work there, the Societe des Batignolles, had included in its contract a paragraph about the "furnishing of men". This Company has been "furnished" 8,000 men for the construction of the Congo Ocean Railway. This Railway is for French Equatorial Africa what the Trans-Saharan Railway will be in Northern Africa for the unification of the African colonies. This Congo-Ocean Railway has a great economic significance as it will permit the speedy transportation of raw materials from the colonies to France. Another consequence will be the abolition of the transport of goods on the back of Negro workers which before the inauguration of the railway has been the means of transportation.

This railway has therefore two significant consequences: greater rapidity of transportation and a greater security for the arrival of goods. The construction of this railway has still another reason: French imperialism states, that this transportation on the backs of the natives was one of the main reasons for the constant decimation of the population. It is clear, that we must not be taken in by the humanitarian phrases, which are at present used by the Inspectors of the Ministry of Colonies who declare that the construction of the Congo-Ocean Railway is the greatest fact towards the civilisation of the country. If French imperialism is constructing this railway, it does not do so in order to suppress the transport on the back of the workers, but because this railway will allow it to increase its profits and it will even compensate the shortage of labor due to the decimation of millions of Negroes in the course of several decades, an effect which has begun to disquiet imperialism.

It is quite clear that the construction of this Congo-Ocean Railway has been undertaken because French imperialism did not find enough Negroes for the carriage of goods and in order to make up for the disappearance of millions of Negroes as a consequence of French Imperialist policy.

The second important reason for the construction of this railway is the possibility of concentrating greater numbers of troops by Railway in Northern Africa and consequently in France.

The length of the working day for the forest and mining companies and for the Societe de Construction de Chemin de Fer is not less than 15 hours for Negroes. We must stress the fact that during this Congo-



Ocean railway construction, according to official figures, 17,000 Negroes have already died of fatigue during the construction work. These 17,000 Negroes have died whilst only 140 kilometres have so far been built, which amounts to 123 dead workers per kilometre!

In this region of Haut Oghoue, where this really unheard of decimation took place, 1,100 Negroes have been shot by the Societe Forestiere in 1927 when a number of villages did not provide the required amount of rubber.

In another region, La Gabon, the population has gone down from 1,050,000 in 1911 to 300,000 in 1921. According to the official figures of the Colonial Ministry, there are in Huta-Oughoue, where the revolt is assuming the most violent forms, approximately 4,000 deaths and even 5,000 per year for every 20,000 inhabitants.

These few facts, perhaps somewhat disconnected, show the actual causes of the present insurrection.

One must emphasise the fact that the present discontent assumed a religious form; the leaders of the present insurrection are the "sorcerers". This form of insurrection becomes quite understandable if one realises that in Congo there exists no other factor capable of guiding the Negro population. The insurrection develops in a spontaneous manner.

What have been the repercussions of this insurrection in France? French imperialism and the official Government have generally come to the conclusion, that the exploitation in French Equatorial Africa may have been pressed a little too far! It is characteristic, if certain papers, like the "Journal de Debat" declare that the lack of connection with the colonies has allowed certain exactions which must be remedied rapidly.

Another reaction came from the Ministry of Colonies which plans and is already organising the dispatch of what is called "labor power" of greater resistance. This "labor power of greater resistance" shall according to the phrase of Maginot "relieve our tired population in French Equatorial Africa." It is recruited in Indo-China. Already two detachments of 800 Indo-Chinese have been recruited for French Equatorial Africa.

Among the results which this movement has had in France, it is necessary to point out the attitude of the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party decided to question the Government through its official journal Le Populaire, and it took exactly the same line of approach as the official press; thus, the specialist of the Socialist Party on Colonial subjects, Fontanier, wrote in "Populaire": "The insurrection must be considered as the reflex of the aggravation of our mistakes down there, but at the same time we must admit the enormous achievement of France in "educating" the primitive population of French Equatorial Africa". Secondly, we find in the approach of the Socialist Party the idea that the insurrection is particularly due to the excitement of the most backward religious elements of this region against European "civilisation". Those are the political conceptions of the Socialist Party of the situation in Congo.

What has been done by French Communist Party? The French Communist Party led a rather serious campaign in "Humanite" where it gave all the facts and analysed the results of the policy of imperialist penetration into this colony. It gave some slogans for the fight:

On anti-imperialist Fighting Bloc between the Negroes and the French Workers; liberation of French Equatorial Africa, fight against the Color-Bar, dividing the Negroes of French Equatorial Africa from the French workers; organisation of the Negro Workers in France.

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STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION COMMITTEE  
OF NEGRO WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U.

ON

FRENCH SLAUGHTERING IN EQUATORIAL AFRICA

The barbarous system of colonial exploitation, slavery and oppression is still flourishing in its most brutal form. Forced labor and other forms of oppression by French imperialists in Equatorial Africa has killed off native railroad workers at the rate of tens of thousands and swept away whole sections of the native population. While the International Labor Office at Geneva, in the name of civilisation, is supposed to be investigating the conditions of forced labor among the natives, this barbarous oppression growing out of the conditions of forced labor is going on without any action on their part. During a decade the population has been reduced by six millions. For the last several months native workers have been in open revolt against French imperialist oppression. At this moment French Imperialism is crushing native workers, and carrying "civilisation" into Africa at the point of the bayonet. This raping of Africa, the bathing of the struggles of the workers in their own blood and the extermination of whole sections of the population in order that imperialism may flourish is shrouded in silence and secrecy. Only fragmentary bits of news leak out through the strictest censorship about this uprising and the consequent slaughters by the French Imperialists. This censorship and secrecy has as its object the hiding of the barbarism of the French Imperialists.

Brothers and Workers of the World! Protest in world wide unison against the slaughtering of our African brothers and fellow workers! Unmask the Impositors!

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U. calls upon the working class movement to protest and rally to the support of the African Workers.

We appeal to the French Workers to send a Workers' Delegation, including Negro Workers, to investigate this blood curdling oppression of French Imperialism.

World Revolutionary Movement: Mobilise the Masses! Unmask the French Imperialist Cut-Throats!

With our African Brothers and Fellow Workers we struggle against French Imperialism and against World Imperialism.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION  
COMMITTEE

OF NEGRO WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U.

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## THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM MUST BECOME A MILITANT ORGANISATION

The temporary stabilisation of capitalism and the complete desertion of the leaders of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals to the camp of the bourgeoisie have considerably strengthened the position of the imperialists and has enabled them to gain several important victories.

With the help of English, French and other armed forces, the Chinese Revolution has been smashed. The uprising of the workers and peasants of Indonesia, who raised their arms against their oppressors had been drowned in a sea of blood. The national-emancipatory movements in Morocco, Syria and Egypt have suffered defeat. North American Imperialism celebrates its triumph over the Latin American countries and the British Imperialists have succeeded in putting their hireling on the Afghan throne. Triumphant imperialism is more and more openly preparing to effect its chief aim --- the destruction of the first Soviet Republic.

The problem of organising opposition to the further attack of the imperialists and the struggle for the final emancipation of the oppressed nations fighting against the danger of a new world war, and in particular, a war against the U.S.S.R., is at the present time more urgent than ever before. It is for this reason that the Plenum of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, which was held in Cologne, on the 15th and 16th of January, was especially important. The Plenum discussed chiefly questions referring to the organisational strengthening of the League and the intensification of its influence, in particular, in the question of relations with the trade unions. These questions at the present time are most important for the further existence of the League. Organised at the anti-imperialist Congress, held in Brussels in February 1927, the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression and for National Independence, was intended by the initiators to unite "all political organisations, all parties, trade unions and persons, who are fighting against imperialist domination, for self-determination of all nations, for the national liberty of all peoples, for equal rights of all races, classes and individuals, on the basis of the recognition of the resolutions of the Brussels Congress."

The League is not without imperialist persecution and opposition. Its leaders in all countries are subjected to persecution by imperialist governments. One of its most prominent workers, a Negro, Lamine Senghor, a delegate from French Africa, and a member of the Executive, even paid, with his life for his activities in the League. Soon after the Brussels Congress he was arrested in France, imprisoned, and there died of consumption.

The governments of the imperialist States hinder by all means in their power League connections with the colonial countries, not permitting any correspondence or publications to pass. From the commencement this repressive policy of the governments has enjoyed the support of the Second International. The leaders of the Second, so-called, Labor Socialist International, have organised a veritable campaign of lies and slander, attempting to represent the League as the result of Communist machinations. The Executive Committee of the Second International, in September 1927, passed a decision in which it considered it impermissible that any of the International Sections should affiliate to the League. The hostile attitude towards the League has resulted in that many Socialists, League members, including Lanbury, its first President, have declared their resignation from the League.

Despite all the difficulties, however, the League has been in existence for practically two years. These two years have been years of organisational formulation and strengthening. During this period it has become clear to the League who are the friends and who are the enemies of



the struggle against war and oppression. The League is now faced with the task of becoming a real militant organisations which would undertake not only the publication, from time to time of appeals and protests, but also practical work for the mobilising of all anti-imperialist forces in a united international front of resistance to imperialism and militarism. The League must become a real mass organisation. Without losing its connections with individual petty-bourgeois organisations and workers who might bring it a certain measure of advantage, the League should direct its chief attention to the mass workers' and peasants' organisations, and chiefly to the trade unions. Only having connected itself with the trade unions, having received the support of the wide workers' and peasants' masses, can the League become a really serious weapon in the struggle against imperialism. The Enlarged Plenum correctly understood its task, decided to work by all possible means for the affiliation of the trade unions to the League and for their being drawn into the united anti-imperialist front. It is to be hoped that the basic part of this work will be carried out before the convocation of the Second Congress of the League, this year, which is to strengthen organisationally the League and draw up a militant revolutionary programme for its activities.

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Speech of T.W.FORD, Representing the INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION  
COMMITTEE OF NEGRO WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U., at the  
Meeting of the Executive Committee of the League,  
January 16, 1929.

Comrades,

I speak to you as a member of the Executive Committee of the League at Chicago, Ill., (USA), and on behalf of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U. and the American Negro Labor Congress. I bring greetings to the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism.

#### The First Period of the League

We have participated in and watched with interest the activities of the League up to the present moment. From its beginning and up to the present moment, the activities of the League were shaped and have been determined by the necessities and objective conditions that manifested themselves during this time. The League was born almost at the height of the Chinese Revolution --- the most significant historical event since the Russian Revolution --- at a time which required quick action against the Imperialists, and counter-revolution which was setting in. It was a time of demonstrative action; at this first Congress of the League we had the unifying of our forces, a "getting together", most significant groupings in a demonstration against imperialism; this was no more warmly shown and solemnized than when the Chinese delegate HANSON shook hands with the British delegate BROCKWELL amidst stormy and thunderous applause.

But since that time much water has flowed under the bridge, much water that was muddy. We may say now that a period has closed and closed with the betrayal of the Chinese Revolution.

What have we observed?

#### Betrayal of Certain Sections

The Chinese, Indonesian, Arabian and Negro toiling masses, who form the very basis of the League's struggle against imperialism have had sad and most disappointing experiences. We are losing faith in the League, at least, in some of the supporters and backers of the League.

We have seen many who pledged themselves at the first Congress turn their backs on their pledges and on their comrades. We have seen many who pledged to defend the Chinese Revolution, murder and shoot down their comrades.

In the past we have heard and seen the capitalist and imperialist



governments under the pressure of the revolutionary upsurge of the toiling masses, in order to delude these masses and to secure their hold over them, issue radical phrases about self-determination, democracy, propose various sorts of reforms, and so on, but no sooner had they issued them than they turned around and crushed every effort of minorities and oppressed peoples to freedom; they recinded their reforms, reduced the wages and living standards of the toiling masses, and crushed their efforts in blood.

In the same manner we heard and saw social-democrats, labor governments, etc., issue radical phrases. Less have we seen them put forward any effort to carry out their slogans. We saw what the McDonald Government of England did in India, we saw what they did in regard to the Chinese Revolution, not a ship did they stop from going to China with ammunition of the British Imperialists to crush the Chinese workers and peasants. We know quite well what the Dutch Social-Democrats have done to support their government in crushing the Indonesians.

And so when we compare the actions of the Social-Democrats in issuing radical slogans, with the actions of the capitalists, we see no difference, we are losing faith in these sort of people, we have lost faith in this section of the League. We say that in the future it is facts and actions that we want, no lip service, action is what counts and means something to us.

Let us go further. What about the Transport Workers' International and colored seamen? No effort is made to organise these workers, on the contrary, dirt and slander is thrown at them by these same people. What about the organisation of a strong seamen's International, embracing all seamen? Of course, our good friends and comrades do nothing in this field. What about the ILP Labor Party and the colored and colonial workers of the British Empire, especially the Indian workers and peasants at this very moment? Whom and for what do they send emissaries to India?

#### The Second Phase --- the New Period of the League

These are some of the facts, these are some of the questions that supporters of the League must answer.

And the future? We say frankly that we have lost faith. Yet the League has a chance to reorganise itself, readapt its programme, realign its forces to carry out a militant programme of action and struggle against imperialism. In the first place it must decide and outline a programme of determined action against British and Dutch imperialism. It must determine who will go with the League to the end in its programme.

In regards to the Negro workers and peasants. What must the struggle be? The Negro workers and peasants are interested in three main points at the present moment for a determined struggle against imperialist oppression, namely, (1) the war danger and use of Negro troops, (2) political self-determination, and (3) against the reformist actions and programmes of certain Negro organisations.

First, it is clear that the contradictions amongst the imperialists for control over the territories of parts of the world where there are Negro workers and peasants as well as the redivision of the colonial areas of the world, are surely leading to war. Also the imperialists are designing a war against the U.S.S.R., in either case millions of Negro troops will be used by all the big imperialist nations. Not only then but now British Imperialism is planning to send black troops into China to "protect" foreign settlements "against" the Communists, in other words to crush the Chinese Revolution, to crush the efforts of the Chinese workers and peasants, to set up hatreds and misunderstandings between Chinese workers and Negro workers. British imperialism in the past has sent Indian soldiers to all parts of the world. America has sent colored troops into the Philippines and Mexico. France at the present time has almost a million African troops trained. She at least has 500,000 trained and another 400,000 ready to be trained. She is building a railroad across the Sahara to transport these troops to Europe. America called 2,000,000 Negro troops to arms



in the last war, and will continue to depend upon Negro troops and labor battalions. These facts are of tremendous importance and concern to us, Negro workers. They should be of tremendous significance to the League.

Secondly, after the last war there was much talk about self-determination for national minorities and oppressed peoples. Many national minorities and oppressed peoples took these slogans seriously. At the present time it has got through to the Negro workers and peasants in all parts of the world. In South Africa the native workers and peasants are demanding a workers' and peasants' government. Here it is not the cry of a minority, it is the demand of the great majority of the population for political freedom and self-determination, a great bulk of people, workers and peasants who are suppressed by a handful of imperialists and their agents. In the West Indies, Haiti, etc., there has been a long and determined fight for self-determination. It was in the West Indies that the most determined and militant demonstration was made against the agent of American Imperialism, the flying Eagle, Lindberg. In the Southern part of the USA the oppressed Negro peasants and workers have a basis for a struggle for self-determination, and the setting up of an independent workers' and peasants' government. Certainly, the League must support these struggles against imperialism for national independence, for workers' and peasants' control.

And finally, the Negro workers are concerned with the reformist character of such organisations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Garvey Movement, the Pan-African Congress, the Negro Intellectuals, etc. An examination of the programmes of these groups will show that their programmes and their efforts offer no real and fundamental resistance to imperialism. In all cases they only ask for reforms under imperialism, for support from imperialists to help build a government of Negro capitalists to further exploit the Negro toiling masses, for a share, in other words, in the exploitation of the Negro toiling masses. This is the whole trend of thought of Negro intellectuals in and outside of America. The League must support a fight against reformism in all its forms. We could point to a whole series of events that show this among these groups: the capitulation of the NAACP and the Negro intellectuals to American Imperialism in the last presidential election, the attitude of some in the West African Student Union in London. The capitulation of Garvey before the K.K.K. and for imperialist support, the demands of the programme of the Pan-African Congress, etc.

Workers' and Peasants' Basis

So the League faces a new period, the second period, a period not of demonstration and betrayal on the part of certain elements; the second period must be an organised, systematic campaign against Imperialism. I believe with my Chinese Comrade who spoke last night that the League must have a strong workers' and peasants' basis, a strong trade union basis. We must draw wide masses into the League. In this connection I would like to make some suggestions. I call the Executive's attention to the following Conferences which will take place very soon: (a) the Latin-American Conference in May, (b) the Pan-Pacific Conference in August, and (c) the Conference of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers which will take place in the early Fall.

It is our plan in the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers' Conference to bring together the Negro trade unions to discuss their problems and align them with the world workers in a fight against Imperialism. It is our hope to have broad masses of Negro workers represented.

I think these three conferences will bring together millions of workers who want to, and will fight against imperialism. I beg the Presidium to give consideration to the postponement of the world Conference scheduled for July 1929, until after these conferences have met so that we may have the opportunity to draw these broad masses into the League.

In conclusion I say with my Chinese Comrade: in the second phase the second period of the League, we must be for **MILITANT STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM**



## CRYSTALLISATION OF THE NEGRO RACE PROBLEM IN CUBA

(Reprint from "The Nation", Jan. 9, 1929)

Some of this traffic was even too crude for the Cuban Government, which otherwise permits and favours this means towards fostering the national industry, and it was forced recently to expel an American citizen, Harry Hackleton, from the territory for having disregarded the formalities by importing more slaves than required and selling them at only \$15. each. This business netted him according to the Cuban newspapers "a fabulous fortune" in the few years he was engaged in this time-honoured pursuit of his forefathers.

### Americans Import System of Racial Cleavage Among Workers

Though Negroes and dark Mulattoes are not admitted in the "aristocratic" society of Cuba, there is no segregation or discrimination in jobs, in industry, in government employment, in schools or colleges. Often Negro officers command white soldiers; some of them hold high positions in the army and in the Government. They work in all skilled trades, are treated as equals in all trade unions. No Cuban restaurant or theatre would think of refusing them entrance or service, which is all contrary to the custom in the United States.

This state of affairs is slowly being changed by the Americans, whose number and economic influence increase continuously. Though it is expressly against the Cuban law, the hotels owned by Americans or catering for Americans will not admit Negroes or Mulattoes. The Americans in their industrial enterprises make their own laws, disregarding the Cuban laws, and are establishing a kind of industrial extraterritoriality in this respect. The large sugar mills owned by the United Fruit Company, have erected whole towns for their various employees on the territory owned by the company; thus, in the town of Banes, situated on land owned by the United Fruit Company, the firm has introduced the "American" regime, absolute prohibition for all races, and complete segregation of American whites, Cubans and Negroes. In some special streets only white Americans live, in other streets only white Cubans live, and in others only the "colored". No Negro man, woman or child is allowed to enter the streets in which the white Cubans live and, of course, still less where the Americans reside. But even the white Cubans, who are generally the skilled workers and foremen in the mills and plantations, are strictly forbidden --- in their own country --- to enter the streets reserved for the white Americans. At night barriers are lowered and the three different districts, harbouring the three different races and classes, are locked against one another.

But the Negro problem is also becoming an acute problem with the Cuban natives. The probability and the hope of many Cubans that in time the Mulattoes and Negroes will be completely absorbed, and thus make the Cuban nation a homogeneous race, is fast vanishing. The cause of this is found in the condition of the sugar industry. Seeking to reduce the cost of production, the sugar barons found that it would be impossible further to reduce the wages of the Cuban workers. Their wages were already so low, so



near the limits of bare existence, that any attempt at reduction would have caused wide-spread revolt, particularly as the workers are well organized. The sugar companies, therefore, decided upon the experiment of importing inarticulate blacks, as was done in the days before slavery was legally abolished. It was easy to circumvent the law by the legalization of labor contracts, with absolute illiterate Negroes who did not understand the language of the country. These were imported both from Haiti, where the Negroes speak a French dialect, and from Jamaica where they speak English. Thus, these imported Negroes do not understand each other nor the Cubans who speak Spanish. This "black ivory" trade was allowed by a special decree, promulgated in 1912 by the then President, Jose Miguel Gomez.

#### Americans Increase the Atrocities of the Slave Trade

The Americans who carried their competition against the Cuban sugar growers right into Cuban territory, by establishing there large mills and plantations improved upon the slave-trade methods.

Thus the General Sugar Company stimulated the trade in blacks by paying \$25. for every Negro delivered on its reservations. Here the Negroes remain virtually prisoners until after the crop is gathered. The Haitian and Jamaica Negroes are induced to come to Cuba under promises of high wages, unknown in their own islands. Once in Cuba, they are led, surrounded by armed guards, to the sugar plantations and housed there in large, wooden barracks, in which many couples live and sleep without any partitions between them, and without any sanitary provisions, except a hole in the ground at the end of the structure.

As they cannot get out of the enclosure during the entire time of their contract, they must buy all the provisions in the company stores, and usually, at the end of the crop are indebted to the contractor. Many remain in Cuba and mix with the native Negro population. Some remain on the plantation over the dead season and shift for themselves as best as they can. The masters, however, are often kind enough to allow them to remain in the barracks without exacting rent from them during the off season, thus saving the expenses of any payment for new slaves. In the enclosure the Negroes are "protected" by armed company guards, equipped with rifles and rubber whips, who shoot at any one attempting to escape.

Their pay is rarely more than 50 or 60 cents per hundred arrabas (2,500 pounds of sugar cane cut) and as the most skilled workers are able to cut only about 200 arrabas per day the average earnings of these men are about 60 to 80 cents per day during the few months of crop gathering. There were protests and revolts against bad treatment. They were settled by the guns of the guards. Some of these repressions went so far that the British Government found it necessary to protest against the maltreatment of its subjects and requested compensation.

The influx of the Haitians and Jamaicans has increased considerably since the inception of this modern slave trade. Thus, from the total number of 709 Jamaicans and 233 Haitians who arrived in Cuba in 1912, the number rose to 27,088 Jamaicans and 35,971 Haitians in 1920, i.e., an influx of 63,000 foreign Negroes into a population of less than three millions. The number of imported Negroes decreased, however, to about 25,000 in 1921, and dropped suddenly to 5,000 in 1922, the year of the sugar crisis.

#### Spanish, Polish and Jewish Immigrants

The importation was later resumed and in 1924 the number of Negroes imported from Haiti and Jamaica was again 26,000. Since 1921 the number of Jamaicans has been steadily decreasing, probably partly due to the protection and warnings of the British Government, and partly because Jamaicans are much less illiterate than the Haitians. In 1927, the number of Haitians who arrived in Cuba was 14,312 and of Jamaicans only 2,248. These, together with a few hundred other black Antillans, make about 17,000 new Negro arrivals in 1927, out of a total immigration of 31,515 persons. The next largest contingent of immigrants consisted of Spaniards - 8,755; Polish and Russian Jews - 984; Palestinian Jews - 285, and Syrians - 296.



The black immigration is larger than the total of white immigration.

Many Negroes from Haiti bring with them the Voodoo cult and keep alive among the Cuban Negroes the traditions of nanegismo, the religious, medicinal, and witch practices, sometimes even accompanied by cannibalistic rites. At the beginning of 1928 it seemed as if an end would be made to the slave traffic and the "Negrification" of Cuba, when the Government decided to restrict the output of sugar to 4,000,000 tons per year. It was announced that from now on the imported Negroes would be sent back to their countries. But in the meantime the International Conference for the restriction of sugar-production failed, Cuba declared that consequently it would remove all restrictions on the sugar output, even at the risk of driving the price of sugar still further down. More sugar means cheaper sugar and cheaper sugar requires more Negro labor. And quite recently the United Fruit Co. alone obtained from the Cuban Government the permission to import 9,600 Negroes for work in its plantations.

The imported Negroes are not looked upon with friendly eyes by the native workers, as they are used as strikebreakers and in general are lowering the standard of living of the native workers, colored and white alike. The American supermasters of the Island are by no means anxious to prevent this slow Africanisation or "colorisation" of their large autonomous sugar plantations Island. This Africanisation is only partly offset by the immigration of whites from Europe, who, due to the American immigration policy, are stranded in Cuba.

It is not improbable that this white immigration may be stopped in the near future, because many of the white immigrants, particularly the Spaniards and the Jews, are suspected of being susceptible to radical ideas. Many Jews are, in fact, active in the local labor organisations as soon as they arrive on the Island, and therefore white immigrants are not so welcome as the willing, submissive blacks from Haiti.

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